

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00
INRE-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 INR-07 L-03 ACDA-07 NSAE-00
PA-01 SS-15 PRS-01 SP-02 TRSE-00 NSC-05 DODE-00 /071 W
-----141801Z 026296 /43

O P 141648Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9497
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USMISSION NATO
USCINCEUR
CINCUSNAVEUR
USDOCOSOUTH
CINCUSAFE
USNMR SHAPE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 ATHENS 2312

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, GR, TU
SUB: TURKISH AEGEAN EXERCISES SPARK SHARP REACTION

REF: ATHENS USDAO IR 6-837-0045-77 (DTG 071345Z MAR 77) (NOTAL)

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1. BEGIN SUMMARY. THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT TURKEY WOULD BE
CONDUCTING COMBINED AIR-SEA MILITARY EXERCISES IN THE
AEGEAN MARCH 21-27 SPARKED A SHARP REACTION IN GREECE
OBER THE WEEKEND. (THE PLANNED TURKISH EXERCISES WERE
DESCRIBED IN REFTEL.) WHILE THE GOVERNMENT-OPERATED ELECTRONIC
MEDIA GAVE PROMINENT, THOUGH MATTER-OF-FACT, TREATMENT
TO THE STORY, THE PRESS PREDICTABLY SENSATIONALIZED ITS
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COVERAGE AND GENERALLY DECRIED "TURKISH PROVOCATIONS."
THE MEDIA CARRIED A BRIEF GOVERNMENT STATEMENT
THAT IT HAD PROTESTED TO THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT THE
MANNER IN WHICH THE GOT PLANS TO CARRY OUT THE
ANNOUNCED EXERCISES, CLAIMING IT WAS AN "ABUSE OF
A RIGHT" SINCE THE EXERCISES WOULD DISRUPT TRANSPORTA-
TION IN THE AREA. OPPOSITION LEADERS ALSO CONDEMNED

THE TURKISH "PROVOCATUON" AND CALLED FOR SUSPENSION OF BILATERAL TALKS OVER AEGEAN ISSUES. END SUMMARY.

2. MOST OF THE REPORTING CENTERED ON THE GOG'S OFFICIAL STATEMENT, COMMENTS BY A "GOVERNMENT SOURCE", AND STATEMENTS BY THE OPPOSITION PARTIES (EXCEPT FOR THE MOSCOW-ORIENTED COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREECE). IN ITS STATEMENT, THE GOG ANNOUNCED IT HAD PROTESTED TO THE GOT THE MANNER IN WHICH TURKEY PLANNED TO CONDUCT ITS AIR-NAVAL MANEUVERS IN THE AEGEAN MARCH 21-27, ACKNOWLEDGING THAT TURKEY HAD THE RIGHT TO CONDUCT THE EXERCISES IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS, THE STATEMENT SAID WHAT WAS PLANNED WAS AN ABUSE OF A RIGHT SINCE THE EXERCISES WOULD DISRUPT TRANSPORTATION IN THE AREA. IT CONCLUDED BY COMMENTING TERSELY THAT THE GOG "WAS STUDYING THE SITUATION" AND -- REFERRING TO OPPOSITION CRITICISM -- "IT DOES NOT NEED ANY SUGGESTIONS OR ADVICE" AS TO WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE.

3. AN "AUTHORITATIVE"GOVERNMENT SOURCE COMMENTED THAT GREECE HAD ADVISED TURKEY IN PLENTY OF TIME THAT THE EXERCISES SHOULD NOT IMPEDE FREE NAVIGATION AND AIR TRAFFIC. HE POINTED OUT THAT "CERTAIN OTHER REPLIES ARE EXPECTED FROM ANKARA TO THE GREEK DEMARCHES, SINCE THE TURKS ARE EXERCISING THEIR RIGHT IN AN ABUSIVE MANNER," AND GREEK POLICY WILL BE DETERMINED AFTER RECEIVING ALL THE TURKISH RESPONSES. THE GOG "SOURCE" ALSO NOTED REPORTS OF A NEW SAILING OF THE MTA SISMIK I AND REFERRED TO THE BERN AGREEMENT
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WHICH REQUIRES BOTH PARTIES TO REFRAIN FROM ANY PROVOCATIVE ACTS DURING THE PERIOD OF NEGOTIATIONS ON THE CONTINENTAL SHELF ISSUE. EVENTS WILL SHOW WHETHER ANKARA WANTS THE NEGOTIATIONS TO CONTINUE OR TO PUT THEM ASIDE BY NEW PROVOCATIVE ACTS ON ITS PART, THE SOURCE ADDED, SAYING GREECE DESIRED TO AVOID THESE PROVOCATIVE ACTS, "EITHER BY A NEW SORTIE OF THE SISMIK THAT WOULD HARASS GREEK RIGHTS OR IN ANY OTHER WAY."

4. PRESS ACCOUNTS ALSO REPORT THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT WAS WATCHING DEVELOPMENTS IN THE AEGEAN WITH SPECIAL INTEREST, AND THAT WASHINGTON IS EXPECTED TO MAKE CLEAR SOON ITS OPPOSITION TO ANY PROVOCATIONS OR ARMED CONFRONTATION IN THE AEGEAN. THE REPORT CONTINUED THAT SUCH A U.S. STATEMENT WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY SATISFY THE GREEK SIDE "WHICH HAS NOT ANZLPES NOT INTEND TO PROVOKE TURKEY."

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5. THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION WAS QUICK TO EXPRESS ITS DONDEMNATION
OF THE TURKISH EXERCISES AND CALLED FOR
SUSPENSION OF ONGOING TALKS WITH THE TURKS. UNION OF
THE DEMOCRATIC CENTER LEADER MAVROS CALLED THE TIMING
(GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY IS CELEBRATED MARCH 25) AND
PLACE OF THE PLANNED EXERCISES "UNFORTUNATE" CHOICES
BY THE TURKS IF NOT DELIBERATE PROVOCATIONS. HE
REFERRED TO HIS STATEMENT IN PARLIAMENT LAST FALL TO
THE EFFECT THAT THE GOG WOULD BE OBLIGED TO
BREAK OFF ANY ALKS WITH TURKEY IN THE FACE OF TURKISH
THREATS. TURKEY DOES NOT WANT NEGOTIATIONS, HE CHARGED,
BUT RATHER SEEKS TO CHANGE THE MAP OF THE EASTERN
MEDITERRANEAN BY FORCE. MOVROS CONCLUDED BY STATING
THE THE TURKISH MANEUVERS WOULD BE A VIOLATION OF THE
BERN AGREEMENT AND OF THE BASIC PROVISIONS OF THE HELSINKI FINAL
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ACT WHICH "FORBIDS DEMONSTRATIONS OF MILITARY POWER AIMED
AT FORCING ANOTHER COUNTRY TO YEILD."

6. PASOK CHIEFTAIN ANDREAS PAPANDREOU LABELLED THE EXERCISES "PROVOCATIVE" AND DESIGNED TO PRESSURE THE GOG INTO CEDING NATIONAL TERRITORY. HE, TOO, REFERRED TO THE HELSINKI AND BERN AGREEMENTS AND DEMANDED THE IMMEDIATE SUSPENSION OF TALKS WITH TURKEY. HE REPEATED HIS POSITION THAT ANY RESUMPTION OF THE TALKS --"WHEN AND IF TURKEY CEASES TO THREATEN AND BLACKMAIL"-- MUST BE ON THE PRECONDITION THAT THE PRESENT LEGAL STATUS QUO IS THE AEGEAN IS ACCEPTED. HE ALSO URGED THAT IN THE EVENT OF VIOLATIONS, DURING THE EXERCISES, OF GREEK AIR OR SEA SPACE "WE MUST BE PREPARED TO GIVE THE GREEK REPLY." HOWEVER, HE COMPLAINED, THE GOG WAS "INDIFFERENT" IN PREPARING THE PEOPLE FOR SUCH AN EVENT.

7. THE UNITED DEMOCRATIC LEFT (EDA), IN A STATEMENT TO THE PRESS, LIKEWISE CLAIMED THE EXERCISES CONSTITUTED AN "OPEN PROVOCATION" AND WAS A CLEAR VIOLATION OF THE BERN AGREEMENT. IT, TOO, DEMANDED BREAKING OFF THE TALKS UNTIL "THE OTHER SIDE REALIZES GREECE DOES NOT SUCCUMB" TO PROVOCATIONS. THE COMMUNIST PARTY (KKE-INTERIOR) CLAIMED IN ITS PRONOUNCEMENT THAT THE TURKS WERE VIOLATING THE PRINCIPLES OF HELSINKI AND BERN. DEVIATING FROM THE OTHERS, HOWEVER, THE KKE-INTERIOR STRESSED THAT THIS DEVELOPMENT UNDERLINED THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE USG WHOSE INTERVENTION RECENTLY HAD APPEARED TO BRING ABOUT A POSITIVE INFLUENCE ON THE POSITION OF THE TURKISH "CHAUVINISTS". FINALLY, IT TOO CALLED FOR DETERMINATION BY THE GOG IN MEETING THIS CHALLENGE.

8. SATURDAY PRESS COVERAGE WAS FRONT PAGE, BUT THE TONE OF THE REPORTING BECAME SHARPER ON SUNDAY MORNING AND MONDAY
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AFTERNOON (NO EDITIONS ARE PRINTED IN THE MORNING). LEFTIST ELEFTHEROTYPIA, CITING GREEK MILITARY SOURCES, CALLED THE EXERCISES AN ATTEMPT BY TURKEY TO PARTITION THE AEGEAN. IT ALSO NOTED THAT THE INTERVENTION OF THE SIXTH FLEET WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE, PROVIDED, OF COURSE, IT DID NOT FORCE CONCESSIONS FROM GREECE. KKE-INTERIOR'S AVGHI ACCUSED THE GOG OF BEING MORE INTERESTED IN THE MANNER IN WHICH THE EXERCISES WOULD BE CONDUCTED RATHER THAN THE FACT THAT THE EXERCISE WOULD TAKE PLACE AT ALL. KKE-EXTERIOR'S RIZOSPASTIS CHARGED THE EXERCISES WERE A DIRECT OUTCOME OF THE CLIFFORD MISSION AND WERE INTENDED TO ADVANCE NATO'S INTERESTS. LIBERAL, OPPOSITION TO VIMA MAINTAINED THAT THE EXERCISES SHOULD BE VIEWED IN

CONJUNCTION WITH THE ELECTORAL PROCESS UNDERWAY IN
TURKEY, COMBINED WITH TURKISH "BLACKMAIL" OF AMERICA.
INDEPENDENT (BUT GOVERNMENT SUPPORTER) KATHIMERINI
EDITORIALIZED THAT WITH THE TRUMAN DOCTRINE ANNIVERSARY, THE
CLIFFORD MISSION AND PRESIDENT CARTER'S EXPRESSED
DESIRE TO HELP AS A BACKDROP, NOW WAS THE TIME FOR
THE U.S. TO ACT IN THE CAUSE OF JUSTICE AND PEACE. IT
NOTED THAT TURKEY WOULD NOT HAVE UNDERTAKEN THIS ACTION
WITHOUT "CERTAIN" BACKING.

9. IN A RELATED ITEM, THE SUNDAY (MARCH 13) EDITION
OF TO VIMA CARRIED A SPECIAL REPORT ON CLARK CLIFFORD'S
APPEARANCE BEFORE THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE
(SFRC) DETELINED WASHINGTON FROM ITS CORRESPONDENT
EFSTATHIADIS. QUOTING A CONGRESSIONAL SOURCE,
EFSTATHIADIS SAID CLIFFORD TOLD THE SFRC IT WAS DOUBT-
FUL THAT, EVEN AFTER ELECTIONS IN ANKARA, TURKEY WOULD BE
OVERLY COOPERATIVE ON CYPRUS. NEVERTHELESS, ACCORDING
TO THE REPORTER, CLIFFORD, WHO HAD BEEN INFLUENCED BY
THE BUREAUCRACIES OF WASHINGTON AND NATO, HAD URGED
TAKING THE NECESSARY MEASURES TO REOPEN THE U.S.
BASES IN TURKEY. THE REPORT ALSO SAID THAT CLIFFORD
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TOLD THE COMMITTEE THAT THE AEGEAN PROBLEMS "ARE MUCH
MORE SERIOUS AND REQUIRE A MUCH GREATER EFFORT" THAN HE
HAD ORIGINALLY ANTICIPATED, BECAUSE OF THE ENORMOUS
SENSITIVITY OF CARAMANLIS -- AND TO A LESSER EXTENT OF
DEMIREL -- ON THE AEGEAN. CLIFFORD IS SAID TO HAVE ALSO
STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE TO NATO OF THE AREA AND POINTED
OUT HOW U.S. POLICY IN RECENT YEARS HAD UNDERMINED
THESE DEFENSE INTERESTS. THE CONGRESSIONAL SOURCE,
CONTINUED THE REPORT, FELT THAT CLIFFORD HAD RESPONDED
TO QUESTIONS "SUPERFICIALLY" AND, AS NEITHER HOUSE OF
CONGRESS WAS SATISFIED, PERHAPS PRESIDENT CARTER WOULD
BRIEF MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESS ON THE CLIFFORD REPORT WHEN HE MEETS
WITH THEM NEXT TUESDAY.
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10 PRESS REPORTS SUGGEST THE GREEK ARMED FORCES
HAVE BEEN PLACED IN A STATE OF "READINESS". THE

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INRE-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 INR-07 L-03 ACDA-07 NSAE-00
PA-01 SS-15 PRS-01 SP-02 TRSE-00 NSC-05 DODE-00 /071 W
-----141800Z 026568 /43

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GOG HAS MADE NO ANNOUNCEMENT TO THIS EFFECT, HOWEVER,
NOR ARE WE AWARE OF ANY CHANGE IN THE POSTURE OF THE
GREEK ARMED FORCES. WE ARE WATCHING THE SITUATION
CLOSELY.

11. THE ACTING MFA DIRECTOR OF TURKISH-CYPRIO
AFFAIRS, MACRIS, DESCRIBED THE GOG POSITION ON THE TURKISH
REQUEST FOR THE ISSUANCE OF APPROPRIATE NOTICES TO
AIRMEN AND MARINERS IN CONNECTION WITH THE EXERCISES
OF MARCH 21-27 ALONG THE LINES OUTLINED ABOVE. THE
GOG RECOGNIZES THE TURKISH RIGHT TO CONDUCT EXERCISES
IN AND OVER INTERNATIONAL WATERS. WHAT CONCERN THE
GREEKS, HOWEVER, ARE THE EXTENT OF THE EXERCISES IN
TERMS OF AREA, DAILY DURATION AND TOTAL PERIOD
INVOLVED (SEE REFTTEL) AND, MORE SERIOUSLY, THE FACT
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THEY WILL INVOLVE LIVE FIRING BY BOTH SEA AND AIR
UNITS. ALL THIS CANNOT HELP BUT IMPEDE NORMAL SEA
AND AIR TRANSPORTATION BETWEEN THE MAINLAND AND THE
ISLANDS, AND BETWEEN THE ISLANDS. MOREOVER THE USE
OF LIVE AMMUNITION WILL CREATE REAL DANGERS.

12. THE GOG, ACCORDING TO MACRIS, HAS EXPLAINED ITS CONCERNS TO THE GOT ALONG THE ABOVE LINES AND SUGGESTED A REDUCTION OF THE HOURS DURING WHICH THE EXERCISES WILL TAKE PLACE EACH DAY (NOW FROM 0530 OR 0700 TO 1600Z), AS WELL AS A LOWERING OF ALTITUDE CEILINGS, IN ORDER TO PERMIT NORMAL COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE ISLANDS AFFECTED TO CONTINUE WITH A MINIMUM OF DISRUPTION AND DANGER. THE GOT APPARENTLY REJECTED THESE CONSIDERATIONS AS UNACCEPTABLE. THE GREEK AMBASSADOR THEN RAISED THE MATTER WITH FOREIGN MINISTER CAGLAYANGIL WHO PROMISED TO LOOK INTO THE MATTER BUT THE GOT RESPONSE WAS SUBSEQUENTLY AGAIN NEGATIVE.

13. MACRIS INDICATED THAT THE GOG WOULD, OF COURSE, PROCEED TO ISSUE THE APPROPRIATE NOTAMS. HOWEVER, IN THE INTEREST OF SAFETY AND IN ORDER TO PERMIT REGULAR COMMUNICATION WITH THE ISLANDS TO TAKE PLACE DURING THIS PERIOD, AND ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF THE INDEPENDENCE DAY HOLIDAY WEEKEND MARCH 25, THE GOG WILL INCLUDE CERTAIN CHANGES IN THE PROVISIONS FOR THE EXERCISES AS REQUESTED BY THE GOT. (SUBSEQUENTLY, THE AIR ATTACHE LEARNED THAT THE RELEVANT NOTAMS HAD IN FACT BEEN ISSUED AND HE WILL BE TRANSMITTING THE PERTINENT INFORMATION BY SEPTTEL THROUGH HIS CHANNELS.)

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, MILITARY EXERCISES, AEGEAN, AIRSPACE VIOLATIONS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, PUBLIC ATTITUDES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 14-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977ATHENS02312
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770087-0297
Format: TEL
From: ATHENS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770364/aaaacehl.tel
Line Count: 360
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 498724b9-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 7
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 ATHENS 6
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30-Sep-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3123087
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TURKISH AEGEAN EXERCISES SPARK SHARP REACTION
TAGS: PFOR, GR, TU
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/498724b9-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009